

Broadband Technology Grant (LTPT) Final Report

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CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
II.	DESIGN OF THE IMPLEMENTATION GOALS.....	4
III.	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SUCCESS STORIES.....	5
IV.	UNINTENDED OUTCOMES.....	6
V.	LESSONS LEARNED.....	6
VI.	CHALLENGES.....	7
VII.	FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS.....	9
VIII.	REPORTS, PUBLICATIONS, AND INFORMATION SHARING.....	10

APPENDICES

A: FAMILY CHILD CARE SURVEY DATA SUMMARY

B: CARE CENTER SURVEY DATA SUMMARY

C: FAMILY CHILD CARE AND CHILD CARE CENTER SURVEY DATA TABLES

D: FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

E: GIS MAPPING DATA

La Casa Hogar Broadband Technology Grant

Final Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The Broadband Technology Grant activities conducted by La Casa Hogar (LCH) and its partners have been successful in determining the current status and needs of licensed child care providers in Yakima County regarding their access and utilization of technology. The actions and deliverables outlined in the grant proposal have largely been accomplished. Three out of the five goals identified in the grant proposal have been achieved, and planning to address the remaining two goals is in progress with over eight community partners.

II. DESIGN OF THE IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

LCH articulated a series of goals along with deliverables to help address the goals in order to achieve an increased technological capacity among licensed childcare providers in Yakima County. The Broadband Technology Grant provided resources to obtain baseline data relating to technology capacity among licensed providers as well as information regarding identified needs of providers and potential actions to address the needs. The goals outlined in the proposal and their current status is listed here:

- **Goal 1:** Determine the availability of Internet access, connectivity, and estimated skill level among licensed childcare providers in Yakima County through surveys and focus groups.

Status of Goal 1: Completed. Survey data has been collected and analyzed—283 family childcare providers and 56 childcare centers were interviewed. Details of the survey data are provided in Appendix A, B, & C.

- **Goal 2:** Maximize opportunities for receiving feedback and information from licensed child care providers through achieving high return rates on surveys through existing relationships with Child Care Aware of Central Washington.

Status of Goal 2: Completed. Attempts were made to reach all of the licensed providers currently providing services in the county. There are a total of 69 child care centers and 331 family child care homes providing licensed care in Yakima County.

- **Goal 3:** Conduct 2-3 Focus Groups for feedback regarding key findings.

Status of Goal 3: Completed. Four Focus Groups were conducted—one each in English and Spanish were conducted in Sunnyside (in the southern part of the

county) as well as English and Spanish sessions in Yakima (in the northern part of the county). A total of 26 participants attended the Focus Groups sessions in Sunnyside and 22 participants attended the Focus Group sessions in Yakima. Please see Appendix E for a summary of Focus Group discussions. Survey rates were 81.2% for child care centers and 85.5% for family child care homes.

- **Goal 4:** Develop strategies based on key finding and identified barriers to address technology and professional needs of licensed child care providers.

Status of Goal 4: LCH has begun discussions with its partners to develop strategies to address the identified needs of childcare providers. Among the key findings are:

1. The need for licensed providers to obtain a GED (high school equivalency certificate) or Child Development Associate (CDA) by the end of 2013 or risk losing their childcare license. With 163 family home child care providers surveyed who lack a GED (58.7% of the family providers surveyed), Yakima County is at risk of losing licensed child care capacity for over 978 children, based on the assumption that these providers care for a minimum of six children each.

2. The need for individualized and/or small group mentoring for using technology to obtain additional education, improve skills in English among monolingual Spanish-speakers. This is based on Focus Group comments and discussions.

3. Access to financial support for technology access/equipment. This, too, is based on Focus Group comments and discussions.

- **Goal 5:** Design menu of educational content based on licensure requirements and professional development goals.

Status of Goal 5: Initial planning is now underway among LCH and its partners to develop a pilot project to address this goal. (See Section VII.)

III. KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

The successful rates of survey completion (over 80%) and well-attended Focus Groups provided the opportunities necessary to collect highly valuable information on the current access levels and utilization of technology services and resources among childcare providers, as well as their current educational attainment, language barriers, and expressed needs for overcoming barriers. Information was also obtained on the average amount of time per week available to providers for education and technology training, current technology access (computers, tablets, smart phones), as well as logistical suggestions for preferences on training times, days of week and locations.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping gave LCH and partners the ability to geographically identify:

- Educational levels of family child care providers and center directors
- Levels of English language acquisition
- Availability/accessibility of home computer
- Levels of independent computer use
- Availability/accessibility of internet
- Cellphone use and type (cell phone only, smart phone or no cell phone)

This information provided insight into areas that need concentrated technology resources as well as professional development opportunities related to use of technology.

Detailed GIS mapping reports in Appendix E provide a visual perspective of where these areas of need are located within the service region.

IV. UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

During the development of the community needs assessment, all community partners were very intentional in making sure the model designed was inclusive of the diverse early learning community in Yakima County. Surveys were created in both English and Spanish; these surveys were effective data collection within both family child care programs and child care centers. As we moved into focus groups and were creating the invitation lists, we realized a group of participants were not included in the initial round of data collection. Child care center staff, such as lead teachers and assistant teachers, were not included in the survey. In order to make adjustments mid-way, we invited child care center staff to participate in the focus groups. The feedback and findings from child care center staff were similar to the survey responses we received from center directors and family child care providers. The primary area of difference was the educational attainment of center directors as compared to the teaching staff within centers; directors had higher levels of education.

Additionally, this project unexpectedly intersected with other work being done within the state and region related to racial equity in education and economic opportunity. This initiative, led by Thrive by Five Washington has been active in facilitating a state-wide dialogue about advancing racial equity and eliminating the opportunity gap for children and families. The findings in this technology project confirmed pre-existing suspicions that child care providers who were themselves living in low-income, high poverty communities, and who had limited education and English proficiency, were also the furthest away from access to educational opportunities, including opportunities available through technology. Each of the community partners involved in this grant/project is a member of the Advancing Racial Equity (ARE) workgroup and has committed to integrated lessons-learned from ARE into future implementation plans .

We have realized our role as community members and leaders in the role we play in system development and supporting a society that is fair and equitable. The data we have collected through our work helps to demonstrate the needs within our community and while also advocating for individualized strategies that target the unique strengths of each community. Yakima County is very rich in diversity and would benefit from personalized support and resources to eliminate the technology gap as it relates to access and computer literacy.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

The needs of licensed family childcare providers are much more extensive than those of center directors surveyed. The lower educational attainment and language barriers faced by family providers put them at risk of not meeting the State requirements for licensing. Childcare center survey respondents indicated that some of the staff members are also in need of technology training and additional education in order to improve the quality of childcare services in the centers. The critical lessons learned are that all licensed childcare providers in the region are in need of educational and language support and they are willing and interested in improving their knowledge and skills through technology.

VI. CHALLENGES

Achieving a high survey success rate required persistence, constant updating to contact information and repeated rounds of outreach. Adjustments were made for family child care providers who needed surveyors to call after regular business hours, on the weekends, or multiple times in order to successfully complete surveys. Experienced surveyors and cooperative partners helped in overcoming this challenge by being persistent and patient, and by exerting their highly effective interviewing and communications skills when contact was made.

In order to accommodate child care providers' busy schedules, Focus Groups were scheduled on the weekends, providers were invited two weeks in advance of the meeting date and courtesy calls were conducted a day before the meeting date. The recurring Focus Group challenge was to remain focused on discussion topics during the group time without straying to frustrations about bureaucratic requirements and regulations. However, it is important to recognize that technology access and training can help meet the challenges of those requirements and regulations.

VII. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following information is based upon the survey and Focus Group findings of the Local Planning Team Project (LPTP) planning grant awarded by the Washington Broadband Office/Commerce in 2012. The urgent intent of La Casa Hogar and its partners is to prevent the loss of licensed childcare capacity in Yakima County due to the upcoming requirement for providers to have a high school education, GED equivalent, or CDA. In addition, there are projected changes in the GED process

beginning in 2014, including the offering of the examination only in English. If those changes go into effect, the monolingual Spanish-speaking licensed childcare home providers without the educational requirement will be at significant risk of losing their licenses. Losses in licensed childcare capacity will put the safety of children at risk.

STRATEGIES: In an effort to support families, children, and licensed family childcare providers, LCH and its partners propose a model pilot project to support and educate providers at risk of losing their childcare licenses. The project will address the educational and skill development needs of current licensed family providers with the use of computer technology, small groups, and peer support. Special efforts will take into account individual learning styles and educational achievement as well as address identified barriers including language/literacy skills, geographic location, work schedules, and technology skills and access.

1. **Training Model:** Develop and test a training model for licensed family childcare providers that shows promise for overcoming identified barriers. This model will reach providers in the language of their choice, in small groups with peer coaching support, at times convenient to providers (outside of business hours), and in a geographically convenient location. The project will target number of **seven family childcare providers per group**, facilitated by a professional experienced in the educational challenges, language, culture, and barriers of the participants.
2. **Recruitment:** The project will recruit participants through Child Care Aware and from the survey results. Provider motivation and commitment will be a factor in the selection. A key finding of the survey is that family childcare providers reported limited frequency of computer use; however, 85% of providers surveyed indicated an interest in computer classes.
3. **Technology Equipment:** Staff and partners have identified computer tablets as an efficient, cost-effective teaching tool for participants to access educational information and business tools via the Internet. Training with tablets will be a unifying teaching tool for this model.
4. **Alignment with Early Learning Programs:** Although educational achievement in order to maintain childcare licensing capacity is the main concern of the project, LCH and partners are also focusing on better business practices for providers. This model will take into account the need to coordinate learning modules with Washington States Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Early Achievers QRIS, Washington State's on-line professional development registry for child care professionals, titled MERIT, Washington Administrative Code child care licensing regulations and Washington's Kindergarten entry assessment, WaKIDS.
5. **Achieving family engagement:** A future effort toward improving child achievement outcomes involves reaching out to families and involving them in the education and development of their children. The project will begin with the promotion of family engagement in the activities of this model.
6. **Evaluation:** Utilizing a pre- and post-test for each series of classes will demonstrate increases in both skill levels and uses of computer/technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

La Casa Hogar and partners recommend urgent action to support family childcare providers at risk of losing their licenses. LCH and partners need the collaboration of existing agencies and initiatives responsible for various aspects of early learning and digital inclusion such as Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Department of Early Learning (DEL) and Washington STEM.

DESIRED OUTCOMES for the FUTURE:

1. Maintenance of the current licensed childcare capacity in Yakima County to assure that children have access to safe and educationally enriching environments.
2. Increase in computer/technology skill levels of childcare providers that will improve businesses practices and enrich the educational environments for children and families.
3. Implementation and tracking of learning outcomes as measurements for providers and children. Through the use of an evidence-based software program such as *Creative Curriculum*, licensed family childcare providers will develop skills to observe, measure, and track learning outcomes for children to support their educational achievement.
4. Increase in referrals to community resources. This model will begin the process of assisting licensed family providers in learning identifying child and family challenges and effectively referring to community resources for assistance.

INNOVATION

The following aspects of this project can be considered innovative:

1. Overcoming broadband and computer technology access barriers in a rural, isolated, and educationally-challenged service provider population with cultural and language challenges will be addressed. This target population is often unseen, isolated and/or forgotten.
2. The use of peer support in small groups and one to one coaching will optimize probability of success.
3. The use of computer tablets such as the iPad and possibly smart phone technology for both adult and child learning and for data collection.

COSTS

La Casa Hogar requests \$100,000 to conduct this model pilot project over a 18-month period. This will provide the needed resources to serve at least 14 family childcare providers at risk of losing their licenses. At least one peer support group will be set up

in the Lower Valley and another in the Upper Valley. As the model is developed and made available on-line, LCH and partners will distribute the information to all licensed providers in Yakima County to allow them individual access to the resources. Preliminary budget figures are:

Personnel	
One 0.5 FTE Project Coordinator	
Two FTE Coaches	
One 0.5 FTE Administrative Assistant	
Fringe benefits	
Total estimate personnel	37,217
Consultants/contractors (e.g., for evaluation, curricula)	22,935
Non-Personnel	
17 iPad tablets	27,030
Office space and utilities	
Office supplies	1,050
Mileage	2,678
Indirect Costs	9,090
Total	100,000

VIII. REPORTS, PUBLICATIONS, AND INFORMATION SHARING

The survey and Focus Group results have been shared with LCH partners, Department of Early Learning, and the Investing in Children Coalition of South Central Washington. The information gathered from the grant activities will be instrumental in the development of community based professional development opportunities for child care providers. Data collected, including survey results, forum results and GIS Mapping, will be used by community and state stakeholders in regional efforts to access additional resources and meet needs of local child care providers.

Staff wages and Benefits	\$55,517
Consultant	22,935
Travel	2,678
Equipment (IPads & WiFi)	31,800
Other expenses	1,050
Indirect cost	9,090